

A N
ESSAY on ACTING:

In which will be consider'd

641. f. 8
3
The Mimical Behaviour

O F A
Certain fashionable faulty ACTOR,

A N D T H E

Laudableness of such unmannerly, as well
as inhumane Proceedings.

To which will be added,

A short CRITICISM
On His acting MACBETH

*So have I seen a Pygmy strut,
Mouth and rant, in a Giant's Robe.*

Tom Thibb.

Ob! Macbeth has murder'd G——k.

Shakespear.

L O N D O N:

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M,DCC,XLIV.

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ESSAY ON AGING

In which will be considered

The Medical Behaviour

OF THE

Geographical Distribution of the

AND

Establishment of the various

as influence the

To which



A Short
On the

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Printed for W. B. at the
in the Town of
Glasgow, 1844.

M.DCCCXLIV.

AN
ESSAY
ON
ACTING, &c.

AS I have a long Time (twenty Years, or more) made the STAGE, and ACTING, my *Study* and *Entertainment*, I look upon myself, and indeed am thought by my Intimates, a proper Person to *animadvert* upon,

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or

or approve, the Errors and the Excellencies of the Theatre; and as there can be no better Opportunity offer itself than now, when the Town is running after their *little fashionable Actor*, in a Character of which he is, properly speaking, the *Anticlimax* of, or rather the *Antipode* of *Shakespear*; I will endeavour in the following Dissection of our *Puppet Heroe*, to convince my dear *Country Men* and *Country Women*, that they are madly following an *Ignis fatuus*, or *Will of the Whisp*, which they take for *real substantial Light*, and which I shall prove to be only the *Rush-light of Genius*, the *Idol of Fashion*, and an *Air-drawn Favourite* of the *Imagination*.

HOW are we degenerated in Taste! Oh how chang'd! how fallen!* That our Theatre shall be crowded with Nobility, Ladies and Gentry, to see *Macbeth Buglesqu'd*, or *Be-g-k'd* which are synonymous, when they might read Mr. *Theobald's Edition* of him, without throwing away their Money,

* Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

mispending their Time, ruining their Taste, or running the Hazard of catching a violent Cold, for a mere *Non-entity*: However, that I may not seem to be prejudic'd against Mr. G——k, as I really am not, for I admire him, for thus boldly daring to deceive and cheat three Parts of the Nation; I shall, having now crack'd the *Shell* of my *Spleen* against the Town, come to the *Kernel* of *Reason*, and present 'em this little sweet *Nut* of theirs, *worm-eaten* to the *Sight*, *imbit-ter'd* to their *Taste*, and *abborr'd* to their *Imaginations*, as *Shakespear* terms it.

IN order to do this, I shall present my Readers with the following short *Treatise* upon ACTING, which will shew 'em what ACTING ought to be, and what the present *Favourite* in Question is not.

Natural, Metaphysical, and Conventional Deductions, that will immediately shew the Right from the Wrong, and how my De-
 Aims are merely Scientific, and not sub-
 servient to Pique and partial Prejudice.

[4]
A
Short TREATISE

U P O N

A C T I N G.

By which

The PLAYERS may be *Instructed*,
and the TOWN *Undeceiv'd*.

That I may convince the World, that the Publick Good, and no Private Animosity, has extracted the following Treatise from its Author. I shall first give an ample and clear Definition of ACTING, and make the Natural, Metaphysical, and Consequential Deductions, that will immediately elicit the Right from the Wrong, and shew my Designs are merely Scientifical, and not Subservient to Pique and partial Prejudice.

ACT-

ACTING is an *Entertainment of the Stage*, which by calling in the Aid and Assistance of *Articulation, Corporeal Motion, and Occular Expression*, imitates, assumes, or puts on the various *mental and bodily Emotions* arising from the various *Humours, Virtues and Vices*, incident to human Nature.

THERE are *Two* different Kinds of Exhibitions, viz. **TRAGEDY** and **COMEDY**; the first fixes her Empire on the *Passions*, and the more exalted *Contractions and Dilations* of the Heart; the last, tho' not inferior (*quotidien Science*) holds her Rule over the less enobled Qualities and Districts of human Nature, which are call'd the *Humours*: Now in some Cases, *Passions* are *Humours*, and *Humours* *Passions*; for the Revenges of an *Alexander* and a *Harbasher*, may have the same *Fountain*, and differ only in their *Currents*, and tho' the one (*Alexander*) cannot content himself but with the total Subversion of his Enemy's

my's Kingdom, and the other (*the Haberdasher*) is satisfy'd with rolling his Antagonist in the Kennel; yet, still it is *Revenge*, the Mind of one is equally affected in Proportion to the other, and all the Difference lies in the different Ways of *satisfying their common Passion*. But now to the Application, and Design in Hand. If an Actor, and a favourite Actor, in assuming these different Characters with the *same Passions*, shall unskilfully differ only in *Dress*, and not in *Execution*; and supposing him right in *One*, and of Consequence absolutely ridiculous in the *Other*. Shall this Actor, I say, in Spite of *Reason, Physicks, and common Observation*, be caress'd, applauded, admir'd? But to illustrate it more by Example.—Suppose the *Murder of Duncan*, and the *Breaking a Urinal* shall affect the Player in the same Manner, and the only Difference is the *blue Apron and lac'd Coat*, shall we be chill'd at the *Murderer*, and roar at the *Tobacconist*? Fie for Shame! ---- As the *One* must be absolutely the Reverse of Right, I think the Publick, for so gross an Imposition, should drive

drive both off the Stage. When *Drugger* becomes *Macbeth*, and *Macbeth Drugger*, I feel for the Manes of the *Immortal Shakespear*, and *Inimitable Ben*; I bemoan the *Taste* of my Country, and I would have the *Buffoon* sacrific'd to appease the *Muses*, and restore to us a true *Dramatick Taste*, by such an exemplary Piece of Justice. I shall now, as relative to my my present Subject, describe in what Manner the two abovemention'd Characters ought to be mentally and corporeally Agitated, under the different Circumstances of the *Dagger*, and *Urinal*; and by that shall more fully delineate what is meant by *Passions* and *Humours*. When *Abel Drugger* has broke the *Urinal*, he is mentally absorb'd with the different Ideas of the invaluable Price of the *Urinal*, and the Punishment that may be inflicted in Consequence of a Curiosity, no way appertaining or belonging to the Business he came about. Now, if this, as it certainly is, the Situation of his Mind. How are the different Members of the Body to be agitated? Why Thus, — His Eyes must

must be revers'd from the Object he is most intimidated with, and by dropping his *Lip* at the same Time to the Object, it throws a trembling *Languor* upon every *Muscle*, and by declining the right Part of the Head towards the *Urinal*, it casts the most comic *Terror* and *Shame* over all the upper Part of the Body, that can be imagin'd; and to make the lower Part equally ridiculous, his *Toes* must be inverted from the *Heel*, and by holding his *Breath*, he will unavoidably give himself a *Tremor* in the *Knees*, and if his *Fingers*, at the same Time, seem convuls'd, it finishes the compleatest low Picture of *Grotesque Terror* that can be imagin'd by a *Dutch Painter*. — Let this be compar'd with the *modern Copies*, and then let the Town judge. — Now to *Macbeth*. — When the *Murder* of *Duncan* is committed, from an immediate *Consciousness* of the Fact, his *Ambition* is ingulph'd at that Instant, by the Horror of the Deed; his *Faculties* are intensely rivited to the *Murder* alone, without having the least Consolation of the consequential *Advantages*,

to comfort him in that Exigency. He should at that Time, be a *moving Statue*, or indeed a *petrify'd Man*; his Eyes must *Speak*, and his Tongue be *metaphorically Silent*; his Ears must be *sensible of imaginary Noises*, and deaf to the *present and audible Voice of his Wife*; his *Attitudes* must be *quick and permanent*; his Voice *articulately trembling*, and *confusedly intelligible*; the Murderer should be seen in *every Limb*, and yet every *Member*, at that Instant, should seem *separated from his Body*, and his *Body from his Soul*: This is the Picture of a compleat *Regicide*, and as at that Time the *Orb below should be hush as death*; I hope I shall not be thought *minutely circumstantial*, if I should advise a *real Genius* to wear *Cork Heels* to his Shoes, as in this Scene he should seem to *tread on Air*, and I promise him he will soon discover the great Benefit of this (however seeming trifling) *Piece of Advice*.

THE only Way to arrive at great *Excellency in Characters of Humour*, is to be very

conversant with *Human Nature*, that is the noblest and best Study, by this Way you will more accurately discover the *Workings of Spirit* (or what other Physical Terms you please to call it) upon the different *Modifications of Matter*. Would the Painter produce a perfect Piece to the World, let him *Copy from the Life*, let Nature herself sit to the Artist: Wou'd a Player perform equally excellent in *his Profession*, let him be introduc'd into the World, be conversant with *Humours* of every Kind, digest 'em in his *Mind*, let 'em be cherish'd by the *genial Warmth* of his *Conception*, *transplanted into the fair Garden* of his *Judgment*, there let 'em *ripen to Perfection*, and become *his own*. *Hic Labor! Hoc Opus!* The late celebrated Mr. *Dogget*, before he perform'd the Character of *Ben*, in *Love for Love*, took Lodgings in *Wapping*, and gather'd thence a *Nossegay* for the whole Town: Another Comedian now living, tho' not upon the Stage (it being so replete with greater Geniuses) has been observ'd constantly to attend the 'Change for *Weeks together*,

ther, before he exhibited one of *Shakespear's* most inimitable and *difficult* Characters, and so far succeeded by his *great Attention* and *Observation* of the *Manners, Dress, and Behaviour* of a *particular Tribe of People*, that the *Judgment, Application, and extraordinary Pains* he took to divert the Publick *rationally*, was amply return'd with crowded Theatres, and *unequall'd Applauses*; nay, to so *great a Degree* did they shew their Approbation to this *Pains-taking Genius*, that he is at present more known by the Name of the *Character he perform'd*, than by *his own*.

I shall not enter into the Reasons why he is at present excluded the Theatre, but shall only, as an Advocate for the Publick, say that I wish for *their Sake*, that there were many such Actors as him upon *both Theatres*.

I have, in as concise a Manner as possible, given my Sentiments of *Acting*, by *Example and Precept*; but there will very

soon be publish'd a more compleat and expanded *Treatise upon ACTING*, with an accurate *Description* of each *Humour* and *Passion*, their *Sources* and *Effects*; by which the *Players* may be taught to renounce their *Errors*, and the *Town* its Judgment of *Acting* and *Actors*.-----

Here Ends the Essay upon Acting.

Some Critical OBSERVATIONS upon
the Character of MACBETH, as it
is at present Attempted at the
Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane.

THE following Critique is design'd as a
Supplementary Appendix to the fore-
going *Essay on ACTING*, and as that was not
so full and investigating, as my Imagination
had at first form'd it, I shall in this short
Survey of Heroism in Miniature, still have
my Eye upon the *Essay on ACTING*, and
at the same Time convince the Publick,
that they have insensibly been misguided by
Fashion,

Fashion, and that they have in the Dark run-a-ground their Reputation on the Sandy Banks of Error: But I shall now fix a Lanthorn at the Poop of their Misconceptions, they shall see their Distress, I will set my Hand to the Pump of Conviction, clear the Vessel from sixteen Feet Water of Anti-Taste, keep it from foundering, hoist up the Flag of Criticism, and once more pilot their Understandings into the Harbour of True Judgment: But Metaphor apart, what is the Character of Macbeth? He is an experienc'd General, crown'd with Conquest; innately Ambitious, and religiously Humane, spurr'd on by metaphysical Prophecies, and the unconquerable Pride of his Wife, to a Deed, horrid in itself, and repugnant to his Nature; but as it is the Ladder to the swelling Act of the Imperial Theme, his Mile soon becomes Gall, imbitters his whole Disposition, and the Consequence is the Murder of Duncan, the taking off of Banquo, and his own Coronation. Thus stands Macbeth. Now to our Inferences. Valour and Ambition, the two Grand Characteristicks of Macbeth,

beth, form in the *Mind's Eye* a Person of
 near *six Feet High*, corpulently *Graceful*,
 a round *Visage*, a large *hazel Eye*, *aquiline*
Nose, *prominent Chest*, and a *well-calv'd*
Leg, rather inclin'd to that which is call'd
 an *Irish Leg*; this, I say, would be the
Painter's Choice, was he to give us the
Macbeth of his *Imagination*; I mention this
 only to prove that Mr. G----k is not form'd
 in the least, *externally*, no more than *inter-*
nally, for that Character, and tho' there are
 many Figures in the World would become
 it very well, tho' not exactly co-incident
 with my Description, yet the nearer they
 approach to it, they will the better look
Ambition, *Heroism*, and *Murder*. Mr.
 G----k, could he *Speak the Part*, is well
 form'd for *Fleance*, or one of the *Infant*
Shadows in the *Cauldron Scene*, but for the
 Manager to impose him upon the Town for
 a *Macbeth*, and to refuse taking another
Comedian into his House, is such an Example
 of *Ignorance* and *Impudence*, that is not to
 be *paralell'd* but by his own *unparalell'd* Be-
 haviour.---Mr. G----k's Dress is very faulty
 too,

too, *his* Coat should be *Banquo's*, and *Banquo's* his, and for this Reason; *Red* and *Gold* suits the Dignity of *Macbeth*, and at the same Time implies, a more *principal* and *exalted* Character, without derogating, or taking from the Rank of *Banquo* in *Red* and *Silver*, who *titularly* bears an *equal* Station as *Commander*, tho' *militarily* bears an *inferior* Proportion as *Man*: This Distinction is very nice, and perhaps may not glare upon common Readers, as defin'd here, but was this Decorum nicely preserv'd, the Eyes of all, from the *Critick* to the *Groundling* (as *Shakespear* calls 'em) would immediately convey to the Mind the several Degrees and minute Distinctions of the Character, from the Colour and Trimmings of his Apparel: — I shall leave it to the Consideration of the Publick, whether or no a *Tye Wig* is more eligible than a *Major*, or a *plain Hat*, than a *lac'd one*, for my own Part, I say, *No*.

SO much for *Dress and Figure*; now I shall proceed to the more difficult and physical Parts of the Character, and shall consider the *Action, Speaking and Conception* of our *modern Heroe*.

THE first Words of the Part, — *So foul and fair a Day I have not seen*, in my Opinion are spoke wrong: *Mackbeth* before his Entrance has been in a great Storm of Rain, Thunder, &c. Now as the Audience have been appriz'd of this, by the three Witches, he should very *emphatically* describe the quick Transition from being *wet to the Skin*, to being almost *instantaneously dry'd again*; Tho' I can't convey in Writing the Manner how it *should* be spoke, yet every Reader may comprehend how it *ought* to be spoke, and know that in the Manner it is *now* spoke, the Sentiment is *languid, unintelligible, and undescriptive*. I shall now examine the most remarkable Scene in the whole Play, which

is that of the *Air-drawn Dagger*. This I shall make appear he has mistook from the Beginning to the End. — *Macbeth*, as a Preparation for this Vision, is so prepossess'd, from his Humanity, with the Horror of the Deed, which by his more prevailing Ambition he is incited to, and for the Perpetration of which, he lies under a promissary Injunction to his Lady, that his Mind being torn by these different and confus'd Ideas, his Senses fail, and present that *fatal Agent* of his Cruelty, — the *Dagger*, to him: — Now in this visionary Horror, he should not rivet his Eyes to an *imaginary Object*; as if it *really* was there, but should shew an *unsettled Motion* in his Eye, like one not quite awak'd from some disordering Dream; his *Hands* and *Fingers* should not be *immoveable*, but *restless*, and endeavouring to disperse the Cloud that over shadows his optick Ray, and bedims his Intellects; here would be Confusion, Disorder, and Agony! *Come let me clutch thee!* is not to be done by *one Motion* only, but by several *successive Catches* at it, first with one Hand, and

D

then

then with the other, preserving the same Motion, at the same Time; with his Feet, like a Man, who out of his Depth, and half drowned in his Struggles, *catches at Air for Substance*: This would make the Spectator's Blood run cold, and he would almost feel the Agonies of the Murderer himself. I have spoke of the Scene following the Murder, in my *Essay on Acting*, and shall only say, that the *Daggers* are near an Inch and half too long, in Proportion to the Heighth of the Murderer. The Night-Gown, he appears in, after the Murder, ought to be a *Red Damask*, and not the frippery-flower'd one of a *Foppington*; but when *Taste* is wanting in *Trifles*, and *Judgment* in *Essentials*, how can we hope to see the THEATRE flourish? I must make a Remark upon him in the *Banquet Scene*, which is the most glaring Absurdity that ever was committed by an Actor: When *Banquo's Ghost* gets Possession of *Macbeth's Chair*, and the latter, frightened at his Appearance, by Words and Actions, says, *Which of you have done this?* Meaning the Murder of *Banquo*;
 here

here the Actor should address himself to the *Guests*, and not keep a *fix'd Eye* upon the *Ghost*; he should turn his Head *from Banquo*, and say, to the Lords at Supper, *Which of you have done this?* For to speak to the *plural* Number, and look at the *singular* (*Banquo* only) is most absurd and ridiculous. Then at the *second* Appearance of the Ghost, at the Words, *Dare me to the Desert with thy Sword*, *Macbeth* should draw his Sword, and put himself in a Posture of Defence; and when he comes to, *Hence horrid Shadow!* he should make a home Thrust at him, recover himself upon the *Ghost's* moving, and keep passing at him till he has got him quite out of the Room: The Manner it has been done *heretofore*, which is keeping the Hand upon the Sword, and following him out, is not so natural and effecting, as the Way I propose; and if any Objection is made, that *Macbeth* should know, that *Ghosts* are not *vulnerable*, I answer, *Macbeth's* Horror confounds him, and his Actions must denote the *Non Compos*. Here I must take Notice of an Omission in

the Part of *Banquo*; when he appears at the Banquet, he ought to rise in a *Red Cloak*, as he was seen to cross the Stage in one, immediately before his Murder; this would throw a great Solemnity upon the Figure of *Banquo*, and preserve the Decorum of the Stage. --- I must likewise observe, that in *Shakespear's* Time, the Actors wore their own Hair, and now, from the present Fashion of wearing Wigs, some Speeches are become absurd, such, for Instance, is this of *Macbeth*, *Never shake thy Goary Locks at me*; when at the same Time the Ghost is seen in a *Tye Wig*: If I might be allow'd to propose an Alteration (with all imaginable Deference to the immortal *Shakespear*) in order to avoid this Blunder, I would have the Actor say, *Never shake thy Goary TYE at me*; if the Word *Wig* is thought more Poetical, it will be equally good, as they are both Monosyllables.

AS I have not yet left the *Banquet Scene*, I must observe that the *Attitude G—h* stands in, at the second Appearance of the Ghost,

Ghost, is absolutely wrong: *Macbeth* here should *sink* into *himself*, or rather, if I may be allow'd the Expression, *hide himself* behind *himself*; or to illustrate it more by Example, *Si parvis comporere*, &c. he should imitate the contracting Power of a *Snail*, preserving at the *same Time* a *slow awful* manly folding up of his Faculties, and as his *Body* gathers up gradually at the Vision, his *Mind* should keep the same Time, and denote its strong Workings and Convulsions, at his *Eyes*; the Glass of Wine in his Hand should not be dash'd upon the Ground, but it should fall *gently* from him, and he should not discover the least Consciousness of having such a Vehicle in his Hand, his Memory being quite lost in the present Guilt and Horror of his Imagination. *The Banquet* itself, which is suppos'd to be a *Regal* one, should not be compos'd of a few *Apples*, *Oranges*, and such like Trash, but of *best* costly *Viands*, and large Pyramids of *wet Sweetmeats*, and *Savoy Biscuits*; this would cast an inconceivable Grandeur upon the Scene, and add greatly to the Horror of the

the Ghost. — *Macbeth* says, *To Night we hold a SOLEMN Supper, Sir*; which Solemnity should be preserv'd, by having several *Bishops* and *inferior Clergy* at the Table, and of Consequence the *supernatural Appearance* of *Banquo*, would strike with double Force on the Minds of the Audience, by their *Spiritual Presence*. I could shew that this Play is even deficient in every *little Decoration*, but this one gross Blunder will suffice to give us an Idea of all the rest.

AS my Criticisms upon the three first Acts of *Macbeth* have been more full and extended than I at first design'd 'em, I shall reserve my Observations upon the two last, for another *Sixpenny Pamphlet*, to which I shall subjoin a Criticism upon *Colombine Courtezan*, which I shall examine critically, Scene by Scene, and lay open the Imperfections of that Piece, discernable to the meanest Capacity, and shall prove, by undeniable *Conclusions*, drawn from known *Postulata*, that the *worst Play* that ever *Shakespear* wrote, is greatly preferable to the whole

whole Performance of *Colombine Courtezan*. I am very sensible what Difficulties and Prejudices I have to surmount in such an Undertaking; but as I have the Reputation of my Country at Heart, I am resolv'd to prosecute my laudable Intentions with indefatigable Care, and unwearied Diligence.

IN short, to sum up the Whole of my present Observations upon this Head, as I profess the strictest Adherence to Truth, despise Flattery, and am incapable of Fear, I will venture to affirm, there is not one pleasure-giving Scene throughout the whole Play of *Macbeth*, as it is now acted: But as I will ever do Justice to Merit, I must own I felt some Pleasure at seeing Mr. Mills's *Green Ribbon and Star*, in the Character of *Duncan*; the unexpected Introduction of the *Scotch Order* was an agreeable Novelty, and discover'd great Fancy in the Actor; therefore I could not refrain from giving it *here* a deserved Commendation, and it shall always meet with my Approbation in the *Theatre*.

I think I cannot better finish a Criticism on *Macbeth*, than with a succinct Description of the Talents and Capacity of its Author. *Shakespeare* was a Writer not to be confin'd by Rule; he had a despotick Power over all Nature; Laws would be an Infringement of his Prerogative; his Scepter'd Pen wav'd Controul over every Passion and Humour; his Royal Word was not only Absolute, but Creative; Ideas, Language, and Sentiment were his Slaves, they were chain'd to the Triumphal Car of his Genius; and when he made his Entry into the Temple of Fame, all *Parnassus* rung with Acclamations; the *Muses* sung his Conquests, crown'd him with never-fading Laurels, and pronounc'd him Immortal. AMEN.

Here ends the Criticism on *Macbeth*.

I shall at once convince the World of my Impartiality with Regard to Mr. G—, by allowing him all the Merit that *Mimicry* can give him, which, to be sure, is very plea-

pleasant over a Bottle, tho' despicable on the Stage.—But how his being a good *Mimick* should entitle him to be a great *Actor*, I can't so easily comprehend; the *Punch* of a *Puppet Shew*, and the *Heroe* of a *Theatre*, are as different in their Characters as the Materials they are each compos'd of. But how can he answer it to Conscience, and his fellow Creatures, his endeavouring, by modulating his Organs of Speech and Action, to those of other Actors, to render them contemptible, by such a visible Exposure of their Infirmities? 'Tis wicked, 'tis unjust, 'tis inhumane! and the People who are diverted by it, and applaud him for it, are barbarous, unciviliz'd, and unfeeling. A *Pick-pocket* is less culpable than a *Mimick*: Suppose, for Instance, an Actor of either Theatre, coming out of the Play-House, has his Pocket pick'd of Ten or a Dozen Shillings, in the *Piazza*, or in *Catherine-street*; Care, Oeconomy and his Business, makes the Loss easy: But if the same Actor is made ridiculous, and looses the Means

of replenishing his aforefaid pick'd-pocket, the *Mimick* that deprives him of ever having his Pocket *pick'd* again, either in the *Piazza*, or *Catharine-street*, is the *Pick-pocket* himself. I believe *Mimickry* was never thought of before in this Light; therefore let it be *consider'd*, let it be *condemn'd*. Besides, as a farther Confirmation of the *Unlaudableness* of such Proceedings, I am told the very *mimick'd* Actors themselves are not very easy under this Treatment, and are resolv'd never to be reconcil'd to any future *Analysis* of their *Looks*, *Tones*, or *Gestures*.

AS I am now oblig'd (for want of Room) to curb the *Impetuosity* of my Pen, and stop its *critical Careers*, I shall in a very short Time lay before the Publick, another Pamphlet, with some more additional Remarks upon the same Subject, which will be a *proper Appendix* to the *Essay on Acting*; and call'd *An Essay on the common Sewers*, vulgarly call'd *Common Shores*, in which will be

be consider'd the *Use* and *Abuse* of *Bum-*
fodder, with some curious Observations
upon the *present State of Politicks*, both at
Home and Abroad.

F I N I S.

consider the Use and Abuse of Power
 with some ~~current~~ Observations
 on the present State of the Nation, both at
 home and Abroad.

F I N I S